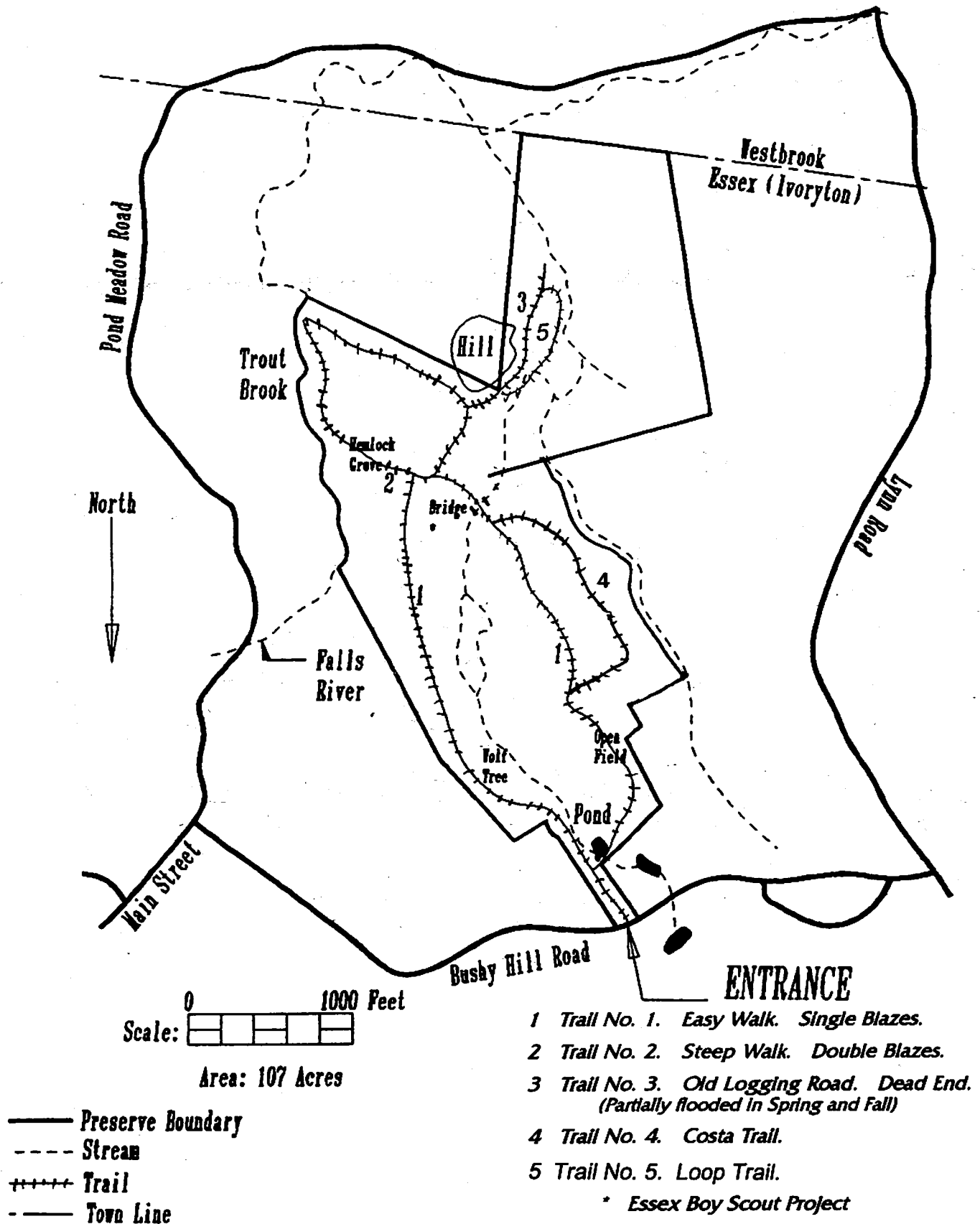


# Bushy Hill Nature Preserve



## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The area is heavily forested former pasture land. Several stone walls are present near the entrance. The major stream flows south and is crossed by a small footbridge on the trail #1 loop. The trout brook flows north and forms the east boundary of the preserve. Trail #2 encircles a once impressive hemlock grove that has been damaged by a small insect called the wooly adelgid. There are several wetland areas along trail #3, where pathways are still being developed.

Many people consider the highlight of the property to be the wolf tree, an ancient white oak that once spread shade over former pasture land. After the pasture was abandoned, a younger forest developed. Stewardship projects have included pruning some dead branches of the wolf tree and creating a patch cut to release the sunlight into the forest understory, causing thick ground cover to benefit wildlife.

## PLANTS AND ANIMALS

The forest canopy consists of oak, hickory, hemlock, birch, beech, and ash trees. Red maples dominate wet areas and younger forest areas are full of red cedar, dogwood, and black cherry. Across the trail from the wolf tree are several pitch pines, whose presence indicates that there may have been a small fire during the last hundred years, since it is a species that thrives in burned areas. The wet area understory features spicebush, sweet pepper bush, cinnamon fern, skunk cabbage, false hellebore, and cardinal flowers. Dry area understory consists of mountain laurel, various ferns, and wildflowers such as violets, Solomon's seals, rattlesnake plantain, partridgeberry, lady's slipper, Indian pipes, and wintergreen. Fungi abound in late summer.

The common mammals of the preserve are white-tailed deer, gray foxes, raccoons, opossums, gray squirrels, southern flying squirrels, chipmunks, white-footed mice, and deer mice. The common birds are woodpeckers, crows, cardinals, jays, chickadees, grouse, mourning doves and tufted titmice. Springtime brings in warblers, native sparrows, thrushes, vireos, and flycatchers. Hawks and owls can occasionally be seen and heard.

## VISITING THE PRESERVE

You are welcome to walk in the preserve during daylight hours. Since this area is a nature preserve, there are posted guidelines to protect the area. Prohibited activities include fires, camping, smoking, vehicles of any type, collecting, and hunting, trapping, or firearm use. Leashed dogs are permitted. The trails are maintained for foot traffic, so horses and bikes, because of their impact on the trails, are prohibited.

Your cooperation is appreciated and helps to maintain the character of the preserve.

## SOME SUGGESTIONS AND CAUTIONS

The trails are well identified. If the area is new to you, be conscious of landmarks as you proceed. Plan well to avoid darkness while still in the woods. Watch for slippery conditions in muddy, snowy, and freezing weather.

If you sense you are lost, pause, take a few deep breaths, and consider some things that might guide you to "civilization:" for example, the lay of the land; the position of the sun; and human sounds.

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# BUSHY HILL NATURE PRESERVE



*The Wolf Tree*

The Bushy Hill Nature Preserve is a 107-acre tract of land purchased in 1974 with the help of state and federal funds, by the town of Essex, Connecticut from Mrs. Adelaide M. Warner. The entrance to the property is on Bushy Hill Road in Ivoryton. The preserve has been developed and is managed by the Essex Conservation Commission.

The purpose of the preserve is to keep intact our natural heritage for now and for the future, by ensuring diversity and protecting resident plants and animals. The area is open to the public for walking. It is not a playground, hunting area, bike path, horse trail or campground. This is a place where humans may enjoy native plants and animals without altering or disturbing their habitat. It is basically a wilderness, a natural and unspoiled patch of earth that will, with your help, remain alive and intact.